

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF TURKEY

BULLETIN NO. 13.

January 1976

Bulletin Editor

Martin Robinson

Editorial Address

c/o RSPB
The Lodge,
Sandy, Bedfordshire
England.

HERE AT LAST!

1970/73 Report.

The long-awaited report covering the four years 1970-3 is now a reality. It will be sent out in March. The unforeseen difficulties and delays have been eventually overcome, and the tenacity and dedication of editor Mark Beaman have brought about a production that is the Society's biggest undertaking so far.

It is a long and very detailed document, unique in its coverage of so large an area, and I'm sure that all readers will be impressed and stimulated not only by the wealth of information inside it, but also by the gaps in our knowledge which are becoming apparent.

We aim to sell rather a lot of them, so we hope that members will play their part and spread the word around. It will be a worthwhile addition to any ornithologist's library, even if he is only vaguely thinking of visiting Turkey, and we are sure that many uncommitted people can be convinced that it is too good to miss.

Besides the systematic list it includes a review by Dr. Kumerloeve of existing literature on Turkish ornithology, which is a thing that everyone will find useful.

Price.

The Report will cost £3, but it will be sent free to all members who have faithfully and optimistically deposited £1 with the society in each of the three years 1973, 1974 and 1975. Anyone who has paid for one or two of the years, but not all three, will be asked to make up the difference to £3, if they wish to be sent a copy, which we assume they do.

Copies will be available from the Hon. Treasurer,
P. Clement, 80 Coverts Road, Claygate, Esher, Surrey.

Subscriptions.

Council decided on 4th November that we have no option but to increase the annual subscription to £2 if we are to survive. Now that we are in business again, with the

appearance of a major report, it is felt that no support will be lost by increasing the subscription to what is still a fairly small sum by today's standards.

The revenue from this increase, which refers to the year 1976, will be put towards the cost of the 1974/75 Report, production of which is already underway.

We would like to take this opportunity of reminding members that subscriptions for 1976, at the new rate of £2, became due on 1st January, and should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer at the address given above.

RECENT REPORTS

These are largely unchecked and should not be taken as authenticated records.

1974.

Dr. Jeff Taylor, who has been resident in Ankara, had some interesting observations which included a Citrine Wagtail Motacilla citreola at Mogan G. in early April and 6 Pine Buntings Emberiza leucocephala in the grounds of the Middle-East Technical University, Ankara, in mid-March. The later have not been recorded since OST recording began.

We have received a report of a round tour of Turkey undertaken in the summer of 1974 by Dave Fisher, Chris Harbard, Dave Norman, Dave Pitman and Terry Walsh. Setting out in July they made for the eastern Pontics, where Bluethroats Luscinia svecica, Red-throated Pipits Anthus cervinus and Collared Flycatchers Ficedula albicollis were seen in several areas. A few Bonelli's Eagles Hieraaetus fasciatus were recorded and an Eagle Owl Bubo bubo was seen at Gezit.

A few days in the Van area produced Marsh Tringa stagnatilis and Terek Sandpipers Xenus cinereus, abundant Caspian Terns Hydroprogne tshegrava, small numbers of Red-necked Phalaropes Phalaropus lobatus, Great Spotted Cuckoo Clamator glandarius and Redstarts Phoenicurus p. samamiscus.

Dead Sea Sparrows again.

Returning through eastern Turkey in mid-August a Lanner Falco biarmicus was recorded at Hazar G. and observations in the Euphrates valley south of Elazig included Rock Nuthatches Sitta tephronota at several sites and a small colony of Dead Sea Sparrows Passer moabiticus. The latter is considerably north of the other colonies that are known in Turkey.

"Migrant Barred Warblers were by now a daily occurrence," writes Dave Norman. "On the 16th August in the Gaziantep area species recorded included Desert Finch Rhodopechys obsoleta, Cinereous Bunting Emberiza cineracea and Ruppell's Warbler Sylvia ruppelli."

Concentrations of birds.

"In the last weeks of August concentrations of birds were

seen at the Central Plateau lakes. Tuz itself appeared waterless. At Kulu G. an impressive concentration included 500 White-headed Duck Oxyura leucocephala, 200 Black-bellied Sandgrouse Pterocles orientalis, several hundred Flamingos Phoenicopiterus ruber and 9 Greater Sandplovers Charadrius leschenaultii.

At the half-drained remains of Hotamis G. 3 White-tailed Plovers Vanellus leucurus and 2 Spur-winged Plovers Hoplopterus spinosus were seen, although no proof of breeding was obtained. The reed-beds of Hotamis were being burnt down - a depressing sight. Water levels at the end of August were extremely low, exposing large areas of mud at Cavuscu G. where waders were very numerous."

1975.

Some very productive visits were made in 1975, mostly in May and June. Stanley Cramp, Roger Lovegrove, Richard Porter and Ian Willis spent three weeks looking at 10 Km squares for the EOAC Atlas project.

In the Kurbaga^V area nesting birds included Avocets Recurvirostra avosetta, Greater Sandplovers Charadrius leschenaultii, several pairs of Cranes Grus grus, many Flamingoes Phoenicopiterus ruber, and Slender-billed Gulls Larus genei. The latter were also found nesting together with Black-headed Gulls Larus ridibundus at Kulu G., where other interesting breeders were a colony of 200 pairs of Gull-billed Terns Gelochelidon nilotica with a pair of Mediterranean Gulls Larus melanocephalus, and 105 pairs of Avocet Recurvirostra avosetta. White-headed Ducks Oxyura leucocephala were proved to breed there, 6 young being seen together with 81 adults.

First breeding record

Down at Hotamis several Montagu's Harriers Circus pygargus were obviously nesting. A pair of White-tailed Plovers Vanellus leucurus were behaving in a way that indicated breeding - the first evidence of nesting in Turkey, and a satisfying follow-up to the 1974 record from the same place. A third bird was also present. Later on, in July, the same birds were seen by Alan Kitson, who reports that the amount of disturbance there made breeding success unlikely. Marbled Teal Anas angustirostris were seen there, as well as at Kurbaga.

Also on the Plateau White-throated Robins Irania gutturalis and Masked Shrikes Lanius nubicus were found nesting north of Ankara, both in new areas.

Pontics.

The rest of the trip was spent in the Pontic mountains south of Rize. At least 20 pairs of Green Warbler Phylloscopus nitidus were found, several of which were feeding young.

Goshawks Accipiter gentilis were found breeding, and Golden Eagles Aquila chrysaetos and Lammergeiers Gypaetus barbatus were seen. "No Snowcock or Wallcreepers sadly," writes Richard, "but 24 species of raptor made up for it. Most were

nesting, or showing signs of nesting."

Displaying Green Sandpipers Tringa ochropus must have been something of a surprise.

A particularly rich valley was that of the Sohun, north-west of Askale. Marsh Warblers Acrocephalus palustris were the commonest nesting species and there were many breeding Blue-throats Luscinia svecica. Oystercatchers Haematopus ostralegus were found nesting there too.

Rarities in the east.

Two Danes, Peter Thomsen and Pedar Jacobsen spent the second half of May in the country, most of it in the east. A new species for Turkey, the Bar-tailed Desert Lark Ammomanes cincturus was the outcome. They were seen on stony lower hillsides in at least four places between Birecik and Diyarbakir, and may well have been breeding.

The Van region produced Crimson-winged Finches Rhodopechys sanguinea, 4 Desert Finches Rhodopechys obsoleta (not recorded there before), a Grey-necked Bunting Emberiza buchanani and 2,000 White Pelicans Pelecanus onocrotalus. Ercek G. had Red-throated Pipits Anthus cervinus, a Red-breasted Flycatcher Ficedula parva and a Terek Sandpiper Xenus cinereus.

"On the way back", wrote Thomsen, "we stopped in the north end of Van at the cliff rising steeply from the rubbish-dump. A number of Black Kites Milvus migrans were coming in to roost on the cliff, which had also many breeding Rock Sparrows Petronia petronia, a few pairs of Kestrel Falco tinnunculus and pairs of Chough Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax and Egyptian Vulture Neophron percnopterus."

One should also mention 3 Upcher's Warblers Hippolais languida seen between Adana and Gaziantep.

In the same month that Porter et al found White-tailed Plovers Vanellus leucurus breeding at Hotamis G. the two Danes saw 2 at Silifke. This is obviously a species worth watching out for.

Another new lark.

Following hot on the heels of the discovery of Bar-tailed Desert larks in the South-east came a sighting of a Thick-billed Lark Rhamphocorys clot-bey in the region of the former Amik G. It flew over the head of a Swede, Stefan Lithner, who was in the area on May 31st.

Other birds at Amik included 25 White Storks Ciconia ciconia, several Quail, coturnix coturnix, at least 4 pairs of black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus, Kentish Plovers Charadrius alexandrinus, Turnstone Arenaria interpres, Dunlin Calidris alpina, 75-100 Practincoles Glareola pratincta, Masked Shrike Lanius nubicus, Graceful Warblers prinia gracilis, Reed Buntings Emberiza scheniclus and Greenfinches Carduelis chloris, which were described as rather common.

At that time Birecik held 90 Bald Ibises Gerontica eremita, consisting of 54 adults and 36 juveniles.

A Town and Gown "Bird and Flower" tour visited eastern Anatolia in June and recorded a total of 177 species of bird. "On the crater lake of Nemrut Dağ," writes Michael Rowntree "6 pairs of Velvet Scoter Melanitta fusca were seen, though no proof of breeding was obtained. Within the crater rim Partridge Perdix perdix, Ring Ousel Turdus torquatus, Radde's Accentor Prunella ocularis, White-throated Robin Irania gutturalis and Red-fronted Serin Serinus pusillus were all found, while the surrounding peaks had Griffon Vultures Gypus fulvus, Golden Eagles Aquila chrysaetos and Peregrine Falco peregrinus.

Tourists.

The marshes near Van had 10 species of duck, including Ferruginous Duck Aythya nyroca and a single White-headed Duck Oxyura leucocephala, as well as Crane Grus grus, Little Bittern Ixobrychus minutus and Slender-billed Gull Larus genei. A colony of Night Herons Nycticorax nycticorax found on Akdamar Island in 1972 had disappeared, having probably succumbed to increasing tourist pressure, and breeding Herring Gulls Larus argentatus seemed to be down in numbers though still plentiful, as were Choughs Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax."

5-600 White Pelicans Pelecanus onocrotalus were seen at the north-east corner of Van G. "Near the pelicans was a Red-necked Grebe Podiceps grisegena and five species of tern on one sandbank - Caspian Hydroprogne tschegrava, Little Sterna albifrons, Common Sterna hirundo, White-winged Chlidonias leucopterus and Gull-billed Gelochelidon nilotica."

More Green Warblers.

The party returned through the Pontic Alps. Istavri was full of Redstarts Phoenicurus phoenicurus samamiscus and Rosefinches Carpodacus erythrinus and the neighbourhood also produced Lammergeier Gypaetus barbatus, Booted Hieraaetus pennatus and Bonelli's Eagles Hieraaetus fasciatus. A Yellowhammer Emberiza citrinella seen and heard to the east of Trabzon was a very unusual record for June.

At Sumela monastery, 35 miles south of Trabzon, at least three singing male Green Warblers Phylloscopus nitidus were present in the woods, one of which was carrying food. "Devotion to identifying these birds", writes Rowntree, "caused me to miss a Wall creeper Tichodroma muraria which was collecting food in the monastery as if breeding nearby."

Wallcreeper and Green Warbler were also recorded by Alan Kitson, who visited the Pontics in July. In addition, several pairs of Crimson-winged Finch Rhodopechys sanguinea were found, a few Red-fronted Serins Serinus pusillus, and Dippers Cinclus cinclus, which were described as very common.

At Kulu G., a spot that has already featured heavily in this roundup, he recorded the enormous total of 10,000 Ruddy Shelducks Tadorna ferruginea, 20 Kentish Plovers Charadrius

alexandrinus, and rather large numbers of migrant waders for July, including 700 Little Stints Calidris minuta, 8 Temminck's Stints Calidris temminckii, 40 Green Sandpipers Tringa ochropus, 8 Wood Sandpipers Tringa glareola and 8 Marsh Sandpipers Tringa stagnatilis.

1974/75 Report. Deadline for records - 31st March 1976.

We have already received many sets of observations for these two years and production of the report is underway.

Could anyone who has any records for this period and who has not yet submitted them please send them to the Hon. Recorder, OST, C/O RSPB. The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. by 31st March 1976. All records received by that date will be included in the report.

Please submit your records in the following way, using one side of the paper only:-

STERNA HIRUNDO (ARK - observer's initials)

W. Anatolia 18th July 1974 Apolyont Golu Colony of 20 prs.
(Region)

* * * * *

SYRIAN SERIN Serinus syriacus Bonap. A new bird for Turkey.
by Mark Beaman.

According to Hûe and Etchécopar (Les Oiseaux du Proche et du Moyen Orient, 1970) the Syrian Serin breeds in the mountains of Syria, the Lebanon, and Jordon and winters in Iraq and Palestine. It has also been observed occasionally in Egypt.

On the 4th October 1974 a party of ca. 15 Syrian Serins was observed in open pine forest in the mountains just west of Belen, near Iskenderun, at an altitude of about 600 metres. In particular the washed-out, unstreaked (or lightly streaked) appearance of the birds, contrasted with the conspicuous bright yellow forehead in the adult males, was the most noticeable difference between this species and the Serin Serinus serinus. The call also appears to differ, being more varied and less trilling than that of the Serin.

This observation is the first of this species in Turkey, although, in view of the proximity of the known range to the gulf of Iskenderun, it is perhaps rather surprising that previous visitors to the area did not record it. The coniferous forest habitat in which it breeds only a short distance away in Syria and the Lebanon seems to be very similar to that found in the Amanos Daglari, where as yet neither species of serin has been proved to breed.

PIED AND BLACK-EARED WHEATEARS

Herr Norbert Jung, 1115 Berlin, Viereckweg 87, 076-4,
E. Germany, is undertaking a comprehensive study of Pied and

Black-eared Wheatears (*Oe. pleschanka* and *Oe. hispanica*) and would be extremely grateful if anyone could supply him with any of the following

1. Observations in the sympatric zone of the two species (only E. Turkey in our area, but otherwise Iran, Turkestan, Transcaucasia etc.) of interspecific interaction between the two species (i.e. behavioural interaction) and any observations concerning the finer points of the ecology of the two species in this zone (i.e. small ecological differences which might serve to separate the two species).

2. Any records or tapes of the call or song of the two species.

3. Any photographs of the species in their natural habitat within the sympatric zone (or just of the habitat provided that it can be indicated where birds were seen).

MUTE SWANS.

We have received the following letter from Michael Smart, administrator of the International Waterfowl Research Bureau, Slimbridge.

"... We have heard via Prof. W. J. L. Sladen, who has recently been in the Soviet Union in connection with the US/USSR Environmental Agreement, that Soviet scientists from the Black Sea area are very anxious to have closer contacts with their Turkish colleagues. They would be glad of ornithological exchanges in all spheres of mutual interest, but in particular Dr. Kostin would be most interested to know if any of the Mute Swans which he has marked in northern Crimea have been recovered or seen in Turkey. Two thousand of them have been marked with metal leg bands and two hundred with black or white neck collars. If you know of any, perhaps you could either write direct to Dr. Kostin (Dr. Yu V Kostin, Crimean State Game Reserve, ALUSHTA, Partizanskaya Str 40, Crimean Region, USSR) or copy any letters to me so that I can forward them through diplomatic channels."

(White collars on swans? - Ed.)

8th A. G. M.

The 8th Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Thursday 26th February 1976 at Bowmaker House, St. James' st., London. S.W.1. Notice is given with this Bulletin.

Previous publications - Latest news.

Report for 1966/67 - Now out of print.

CHECK LIST OF THE BIRDS OF TURKEY. - Now out of print.

REPORT FOR 1968/69. Just a few copies left. Available at price £1.90 (including postage and packing) from the Hon. Treasurer, P. Clement, 80 Coverts Road, Claygate, Esher, Surrey.

